DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 132 673 EA 008 958

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TITLE Who Governs American Education: One More Time.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 42p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Board Administrator Relationship; Boards of Education; Citizen Participation; *Decision Making; Educational Administration; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Governance; Models; *Policy Formation; Politics; School Community Relationship; School Superintendents; Statistical Data

ABSTRACT

This six-step model examines the role of six potential participants in the educational policy formation process. The six steps are proposal development, executive recommendation (performed by the superintendent), legislative action (by the school board), supplementary change, implementation, and review. The six potential participants in this process are the school board, the superintendent, the central administrative staff, other professionals (teachers, principals), the public, and other governmental units. In practice, educational governance is not conducted according to either traditional democratic theory or according to a democratic model of administrative representation. Instead, the executive (the superintendent and his or her professional staff) carries the most weight in educational decision-making. In all six policy formation steps, administrators dominate the school board, which frequently looks to the superintendent for advice and information that it cannot assemble by itself. For example, the superintendent usually sets the agenda and defines the issues that the board will consider. Citizen participation in school district governance is, therefore, even further restricted, since direct input from the public is already minimal. This paper contains additional data collected to extend an earlier study of educational governance. (Author/DS)

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WHO GOVERNS AMERICAN EDUCATION: ONE MORE TIME

by L. HARMON ZEIGLER
& HARVEY J. TUCKER

INTRODUCTION

Once a barren wasteland of political science, educational governance has profited within the past few years by the appearance of a variety of empirical studies.[1] Naturally, in an area so recently subject to investigation, many ambiguities remain. To subsume these ambiguities under the question of "Who governs" is to invite even more confusion, for it is by no means clear what is meant by the act of governing.

Traditional definitions of governance, such as Lasswell's "Who Gets What, When, and How" or Easton's "Authoritative Allocation of Values" are helpful primarily as foci or organizing concepts, as they are too general to serve as operationally precise guides for research. This essay will attempt to organize evidence according to a model of the governance process thought of in terms of six successive and distinct steps: (1) proposal development, (2) executive recommendation, (3) legislative action, (4) supplementary change, (5) implementation, and (6) review. With some modifications, this six step model can be used to describe the normal decision-making process at all levels of government. Our goal, of course, is to restrict the discussion to school governance.

While using this six-step model as an organizing notion, our focus will be on participation in the governing process. The question, broadly stated, is: how <u>insulated</u> is the decision-making process? This question has become the focus of an intense debate and deserves an effort at further explication.[2] Again, there is a need for further definition. The potential participants in school district decision-making are: (1) the school board, (2) the superintendent, (3) the central administrative staff, (4) other professionals (teachers, principals, etc.), (5) the public, and (6) other governments.

The range of participants may vary among the various steps of the policy-making process. By considering both the six potential participants and the six stages of the governmental process, we hope to reach some defensible conclusions about "who governs?"

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Proposal development begins when the need for action is articulated and one or more policy alternatives are suggested. Proposal development can originate with either governmental or non-governmental individuals or groups within the educational system, or can originate outside a specific decision-making unit. Indeed, many of the problems currently encountered by local school districts are the result of proposal development occurring at the federal level. Whatever the source, however, proposal development invariably requires that preferences be translated into demands which require a response. Hence, the question of "responsiveness," so currently in vogue, can be understood as an inquiry into which, of the variety of demands placed upon a school system, are selected for a response.[3]

As the term "development" implies, there is more to this step than the mere expression of a preference or desire. Proposal development involves making a communication to school district officials which they can understand and take action on. Thus, proposal development includes preparation of a formal proposal for consideration by appropriate officials. The result of proposal development is the setting of the agenda (which demands shall be responded to), a formal commitment by the school district to consider particular policy alternatives.

Agenda-setting is the opening round in the struggle for influence, and

by no means an inconsequential one. As Schattschneider has commented: "political conflict is not like an intercollegiate debate in which the opponents agree in advance upon a definition of the issues. As a matter of fact, the definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power."[4] In Schattschneider's view, then, control of the agenda is analogous to, say, choice of a battleground in war. A group or individual will always select a battleground which provides the advantage.[5]

Participation in agenda setting seems largely a professional monopoly in education, with minimum involvement by the school board or the public. In our initial examination of the problem of governance, it was found that, in about two-thirds of the districts, the superintendent (and, in some cases, his/her staff) was solely responsible for setting the formal agenda for board meetings.*

In our later study we defined agenda setting at school board meetings in terms of introducing a topic for discussion. While in most school districts the parliamentary agenda document is controlled exclusively by school administrators and board members, this less restrictive definition makes it possible for all actors to participate in agenda setting. Indeed, district patrons and the general public are always invited to attend school board meetings and make their views known. The distribution of initiation of discussions among our six potential participants in school district decision-

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* Original data reported in this paper were collected in two sequential national studies of educational governance. The first was a cross-sectional study based primarily on survey research. The second was a longitudinal study which included both observational and interview data. See Appendix I for further explanation of the two studies.

making is presented in Table 1.

...Table 1 Here...

Even by this most liberal definition of agenda setting, educational professionals dominate all other actors. On the average, superintendents initiate nearly half of all discussions; and educational professionals account for nearly 70 percent of the agenda. School board members control 24 percent of agendas, members of the public 7 percent, and representatives of other governments less than one percent.

The direct setting of the agenda of school board policy-making is quite insulated from those outside the school establishment. Clearly, the administration occupies a powerful "gatekeeping" position. The administration is in a position to establish an agenda which will minimize controversy and maximize routine decision-making. That is, superintendents and other professionals can set an agenda which, because it emphasizes technical problems, requires administrative, rather than board, resolution. Thus, Boyd asserts that "....there is reason to believe that many, perhaps even most, school administrators are inclined to be cautious in their policy initiations and reluctant to test the boundaries of their influence."[7] It is highly significant, from our perspective that, whether or not Boyd is empirically correct, he concedes the control of the agenda to the administration.

The matter merits further consideration. In addition to the problem of a public body, the school board, yielding its agenda-setting authority to its nominal employee, one puzzles about how much public participation can be initiated when the public enters the game after the issues have been defined.

One should not take the insulation of non-professionals from direct participation in the proposal development step as evidence of a conspiracy.

TABLE 1

AGENDA-SETTING AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

	Mean	Low	High
Superintendent	47%	18%	73%
Central Administrative Staff	19	1	43
School Board	24	9	57
Other Professionals	3	2	9
Public	7	1	33
Other Governments	*	0	1

* Less than one percent.

The public's knowledge of schools is substantially less than that of school authorities. In our mass public sample, which supplemented our school board and superintendent sample, we found that one-third of the public could not name any problems facing their school district. Among those who noted problems, the great preponderance could cite but one. Among this segment, the problem was generally vague and diffuse (e.g., "bad teachers"). In contrast, school authorities cite problems with much greater certainty, specificity, and frequency.[8] Clearly, then, the mass public has little more than a rudimentary knowledge of the issues or, more important, the potential issues, within their schools.

The generally low level of public knowledge should not be equated with disinterest. There is evidence to suggest that the public would like to know more about education provided it could gain access to information. Moreover, the high level of community involvement in isolated, episodic issues suggests a substantial reservoir of public interest, although it is only occasionally manifest. The key is the constraint placed upon the mass public in responding to selected, developed issues rather than participating in the generation of issues. To illustrate, of all the potential issues which might arise within the schools, perhaps the most important are those concerning the very substance of schools: the educational program, or curriculum. Indeed, all other issues are in some sense secondary to this fundamental issue. Yet, to the mass public, issues relating to the educational program have a very low salience. Only a tiny fraction, fewer than one in thirty, cites problems directly or even generally concerning the educational program. In contrast, school board members and superintendents cite curriculum problems with up to fifteen times greater frequency.[9] The gap in saliency occurs

because members of the mass public do not have the expertise to discuss or resolve most curriculum issues. They lack, for example, the vocabulary educational professionals and school board members employ in their consideration of curriculum. The problem is not one of disinterest, but of frozen access.

According to traditional democratic theory, political influence, in this case agenda-setting, follows lines of legal authority. The public elects a school board to make policy. The board appoints a superintendent to administer policy. Thus, administrators follow the mandates of legislators who follow the instructions of their constituents. The major source of power is electoral support, and the norm of policy-making is responsiveness to public demands and preferences. This model suggests frequent participation in agenda-setting by school board members and other laymen. Yet, at least in the formal meetings of school boards, this is not the case.

Another, perhaps more apt model, focuses on professional expertise as the essential element in decision-making. In this chain of influence the major source of power is information; the norm is deference to expertise. Problems are brought to the attention of the school board by the publicly proclaimed experts: the superintendent and his staff.

The role of the public in proposal development under this latter model has been discussed in a variety of recent essays on "administrative representation."[10] The idea is that, since the superintendent is the dominant policy actor, he can, through a variety of informal contacts (keeping an ear to the ground), adequately represent the views of the public to the board.[11] In spite of obvious problems with traditional democratic theory, such a notion is intriguing in its realism. After all, if the superintendent <u>is</u> in fact,

representing the diverse community needs, then the relative quiescence of the public and of school boards is of no concern. Perhaps superintendents receive sufficient communication from the public in forums other than public meetings to represent their desires and preferences for them. Our research casts doubts upon this sanguine view.

Superintendents do receive a considerable volume of private communications concerning school policy. The number of private communications made to superintendents is disproportionately greater than the sum of private communications received by individual board members. If one sums the private communications to each board member, the total normally exceeds (54 to 46 percent) that of the superintendent. However, the superintendent receives far more private communications than any other single individual. Most significantly, virtually all privately articulated demands occur after the presentation of an agenda item. Our earlier research found that superintendents tend to communicate with groups and individuals with a decidedly "establishment" tinge.[12] Our later research found that most communications are in support of a position announced by the superintendent. Eighteen percent of the private communications received by the superintendents in our study were in disagreement, 34 percent were in agreement and the remainder were either neutral or without issue content. This finding is consistent, of course, with numerous other examinations of the private communications of public decision-makers. On the basis of this evidence, it seems fair to conclude that, if superintendents hear largely from supportive constituents, their "representative net" is rather small. As a substitute for public dialogue, private communication is inadequate.

To sum up the proposal development phase of our model: (1) Proposal development is clearly dominated by superintendents, (2) The active role of school boards and members of the public is substantially below that indicated by traditional democratic theory; (3) While superintendents receive sufficient volume of private communications to make a model of "administrative representation" plausible, the quality of those communications do not support a democratic model of administrative representation.

EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDATION

Once a formal proposal has been submitted by one of the actors in a political system, it is usually reviewed by the office of the chief executive. The basic legal mandate of governors, mayors, and school superintendents originates in the administrative oversight function. However, the accepted role of the chief executive has expanded from supervision of implementation of decisions to include responsibility for screening policy proposals before they come to the legislative body. The importance of executive review has grown along with the increased centralization of technical and information resources in the executive branches of government.

The executive recommendation step consists of interaction between the source of a proposal and the office of the chief executive, deliberation and consideration of the proposal and alternatives, and recommendation of a policy to the legislative body. When proposal development originates within the executive branch—which is the norm in school districts—the interaction consists of negotiation between the executive office and the initiating department. When proposals originate within government but outside the executive branch, with other governments, or with non-governmental individuals and groups, executive agency personnel are included in executive recommendation deliberations as expert consultants. Whatever the origin of a policy proposal, the goal of the executive recommendation step is to eliminate "bad" proposals and to modify "good" proposals in order to make them relevant, effective, and (perhaps most important) acceptable to all parties.

In educational governance, executive recommendations are expected and honored. Indeed, it appears only reasonable that those who set the agenda should also recommend appropriate policy actions. As is clear from studies

of municipal, state, and federal government, the prominance of executive recommendations hardly makes school district governance unique. Our later study revealed that superintendent preferences are explicit, on the average, for 66 percent of the votes taken by school boards. The frequency and importance of executive recommendation stems from a variety of sources.

The most important reason for executive recommendations by school district superintendents is to make use of their professional expertise. Although superintendents act as the chief executives of units of government, their basic resource is expertise rather than more traditional political skills (e.g., bargaining). It is a curious anomaly in American popular attitudes that while the concept of local lay control of schools is so highly valued, the educational expert is accorded greater deference than perhaps any other professional in public life. As a recent survey concluded, "if the apparent weight of public opinion had its way, school boards would lose much of their present authority."[13] Schools of high quality are universally desired, and the quality of the educational program is thought to be best assured by placing it under the control of an expert.

Superintendents are called on to make policy recommendations because they will ultimately be charged with implementing decisions. Their opinions are sought, not only to tap expertise, but also to include consideration of policy execution. This second purpose is extremely important because school boards must, of necessity, grant wide latitude to chief executives in the actual implementation of the programs they pass. Even more so than other legislative bodies, school board members are part-time, amateur, volunteer officials. They have neither the resources nor the time to pass legislation in such detail that administration is merely following instructions. Executive review gives

superintendents an opportunity to explain how they intend to follow through after the school board acts.

Another reason that superintendents are called upon to make policy recommendations is that they are the only actors who are presumed to be overseeing an integrated program. Other actors seek actions in limited spheres. While all assert that the interests of the children come first, administrators, teachers, parents, and other groups enter the policy-making process when their own interests are at stake. The superintendent is expected to weigh conflicting input from segments of the school district and to present a balanced, comprehensive program. Since school boards are part-time, amateur and volunteer bodies, they must rely on the superintendent to present a program which does not contain elements which are mutually exclusive or in conflict, and which are appropriate to the district's financial and personnel resources.

Executive recommendations are also sought from superintendents because they enjoy significant political power in the traditional sense. The superintendent is the single most visible representative of the school system. The average citizen can more readily name his superintendent of schools than his U.S. Congressman, to say nothing of elected school board members. Unlike individual board members, administrators, principals, teachers, parents, etc., the superintendent's constituency is the entire school district. The mass popular identification of government with its chief executive makes the superintendent the "tribune of the people." Although they are not popularly elected, superintendents have a base of popular and elite support which they can use as a resource in the decision-making process.

Contrary to the professional maxim that superintendents should not engage in "politics," superintendents are political actors with political powers. As in other units of government, school district governance involves conflict. For many superintendents, political conflict presents a crucial paradox: when conflict occurs, the technical skills so diligently developed not only are of no value, they are a liability. Trained in the tenets of an ideology which defines conflict as pathological and consensus as the most legitimate basis of a decision, superintendents may find conflict more painful than other executive officers. A defensive, hostile response to criticism may then generate more intense conflict. Thus, superintendents with doctorate degrees (the most ideologically committed) and little on-the-job experience, experienced substantially higher levels of decision-making conflict than other superintendents. Those with either less education, or more experience (which mediates the negative influence of education) were able to manage conflict with more skill.[14]

In two of the districts we examined for an entire academic year, the superintendent's contract subsequently was not renewed. In neither case was there a public discussion of administrative problems, nor was there any appreciable dissent by the board from the superintendent's policy position.[15] The norm of unity, of concealing disputes from public scrutiny, operates to prevent broadening the arena of conflict. Nevertheless, the board, while not publicly challenging the superintendent, simply replaced him.

In such cases, the basic resource of the superintendent, his expertise, is not acceptable as negotiable. Because superintendents rely upon expertise, rather than more traditional political skills, when this resource is declared inapplicable, the power base of the superintendent is destroyed. It is no surprise that issues such as busing and school closures made necessary by

declining enrollments, which are not solvable by technical skills, are so troublesome to superintendents. As American schools move from an era of expanding resources to one of scarce resources, the essentially political issue of resource distribution will become dominant. School boards will continue to turn to superintendents for recommendations. Superintendents must use both their political and technical resources as the task of conflict management becomes more prominent in school district governance.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

If proposal development is characterized in terms of agenda setting, executive review should be characterized as agenda refining. Legislative action, then, is the process of making authoritative decisions concerning the items of the policy agenda. We now turn our attention to public school board meetings, for it is here that, after superintendent and staff set the agenda and recommend a policy alternative, formal decisions are made by the school board.

The primary function of legislative sessions of school boards is decision-making. As Table 2 summarizes, our study of school board meetings found that an average of nearly three-fourths of all discussions are intended to be concluded with some sort of formal decision. As the wide range of proportion of discussions intended for decision indicates, school boards differ in the character of their legislative sessions. Some boards combine decision-making and public hearing functions; others conduct separate meetings for public hearings.

... Table 2 Here ...

Table 2 also shows that school boards successfully reach decisions when they are intended, and that the vast majority of decisions are made by a formal vote.

TABLE 2

PURPOSE AND RESOLUTION OF DISCUSSIONS
AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

	Mean	Low	High
Decision Intended	74%	47	97
Decision Reached When Intended	90	58	99
Decision By Vote	86	72	97

We have already seen that superintendents and their staff members dominate agenda setting for school board meetings. However, school boards permit and encourage participation from all six of our potential participants during their legislative sessions. Tables 3 through 6 summarize participation at legislative sessions of school boards.

In Table 3 the unit of analysis is the discussion, and the percentages given represent the proportion of discussions in which at least one member of a category of actors made at least one statement. As one would expect, school board participation is nearly universal, Superintendents participate, on the average, in less than half the discussions (it should be noted that the range is from 24 to 71 percent). Central administrative staff participate in 35 percent, and other professionals in 17 percent. A member of the "school establishment" participates in virtually every discussion. The "outsiders" are the public and representatives of other governments. They participate, on the average, in one of five discussions.

... Table 3 Here ...

Table 4 presents another definition of participation. Here the unit of analysis is the statement. For each group of actors the entry is the percentage of all statements made at school board meetings. Again, a picture of school officials talking among themselves emerges. Less than 10 percent of all statements are made by the public and government officials.

... Table 4 Here ...

A low level of public participation is only partially demonstrated by these data. Equally important is <u>what</u> is said. If public participation, albeit infrequent, is visibly policy-laden, then the low aggregate participation may be misleading. To gain an idea of the content of public input, we

TABLE 3

PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSIONS AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

	Mean	Low	High
School Board	94	84	100
Superintendent	43	24	71
Central Administrative Staff	35	18	63
Other Professionals	17	11	25
Public	20	6	42
Other Governments	1	*	2

* Less than 1%.

TABLE 4

PROPORTION OF STATEMENTS MADE AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

	Mean	Low	High
School Board	60	47	74
Superintendent	12	7	18
Central Administrative Staff	14	7	28
Other Professionals	6	4	9
Public	9	2	16
Other Governments	*	*	1

* Less than 1%.

categorized each communication according to whether the participant made a demand (either in favor or in opposition to a proposed policy), or sought information about a proposed or existing policy. Demand articulation from non-official sources is a key ingredient in democratic political theory. Political scientists typically assume a model of governance which begins with the articulation, usually through organizational activity, of preferences. Hence, the response to such requests is a key variable in evaluating the performance of public bodies.

However, such a model is inappropriate for school governance. Public participation is typically informational; few demands are made, as indicated by Table 5. Clearly, public meetings do not promote an opportunity for demand

... Table 5 Here ...

articulation and response. By monitoring "public" discussion (e.g., letters to the editor, television coverage, etc.), we were able to chart the policy preferences on the part of active citizens. Such demands do exist, and rise and fill with the level of controversy. They do not, however, achieve visibility at public meetings. Indeed, as the level of controversy increased, the agenda and discussions of boards became even more heavily laden with routine matters. The norm of unity prevails.

On the other hand, private communications are substantially more policy-laden. More than half of such communications are classified as demands. Yet, since such communications normally occur after agenda-setting and are supportive of the course of action intended by the administration, they are an inadequate substitution for a genuine public dialogue.

After the agenda has been set and discussion has been completed, some

TABLE 5

TYPES OF STATEMENTS MADE AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

(In Percentages)

	Demand Favor	Demand Opposed	Request Info	Supply Info
Superintendent	22%	2%	6%	71%
School Board Member	26	4	27	44
Staff Official	11	1	3	85
Line Official	11	2	2	85
Public	26	13	17	44
Government Official	8	6	2	84

sort of decision is in order. Table 6 summarizes this important aspect of participation at school board meetings: who makes formal policy proposals which are considered by the school board. This is different from the question of agenda setting because the person who initiates discussion may or may not make a policy proposal. We define a proposer as the first person who articulates a proposal which is decided upon--favorably or negatively--by the school board. Although most boards require that a formal motion be made by a school board member, our definition of proposal-making is less restrictive. All six categories of potential participants are potential policy proposers.

... Table 6 Here ...

School board decision-making is even more insulated from the public by this measure of participation. Persons outside the school district establishment account for an average of less than 3 percent of policy proposals. In no district do outsiders make as many as 10 percent of proposals. Generally speaking, two-thirds of policy proposals are originally articulated by school board members, and the other one-third by the superintendent and his staff. Clearly, by design or chance, the public is insulated from direct participation in decision-making at the legislative action step.

Our earlier research indicated that, with exceptions, the superintendent had his way. That is, opposition by the board to the recommendations of the administration was reported in a minority of districts. Further, when opposition was reported, it was likely to be unsuccessful. Our initial report was based upon the responses of school board members, rather than superintendent. Board members were asked to estimate the probability of the superintendent eventually achieving his policy alternative in the face of board opposition.[16] Here we encounter the same problem as was observed with agenda setting.

TABLE 6

POLICY PROPOSALS MADE AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

	Mean	Low	High
School Board	65	25	97
Superintendents	26	1	69
Central Administrative Staff	6	*	23
Other Professionals	1	*	6
Public	2	*	9
Other Governments	*	*	1

* Less than 1%.

that is, if a superintendent estimated the probability of success as low, would he not avoid a confrontation? Boyd is a conspicuous advocate of this position.[17] If this notion is correct, then the superintendent's estimate of victory should be lower than the board's. However, when asked a question identical to the one asked the board, superintendents gave more optimistic estimates. Fifty-four percent of the board sample believed that the superintendent would "win" in the face of board opposition, compared with 79 percent of the superintendents.[18] We suspected, then, that the "anticipated response" sanction was exaggerated. If superintendents were confident they could win, why should they be cautious?

However, in view of the fact that, by matching board and superintendent responses by district, we discovered substantial variance in percentages, the question was pursued by recording the roll-call votes of the school board in our longitudinal study. As Table 7 shows, the superintendent was either asked or volunteered a policy recommendation, on the average, for two of every three voting decisions. In some districts, the superintendent was substantially less active in recommending policy than in others. Indeed, one indicator of community conflict is the policy-passive behavior of the superintendent. Nevertheless, the norm is for the superintendent to make a recommendation. Table 7 also shows that adoption of superintendent recommendations, usually unanimously, is also the norm.

... Table 7 Here ...

School boards react to their superintendents, much in the manner of Congress reacting to the initiative of the "chief legislator," the president. The basic resource of the board is its representative capacity, yet few boards have been able to escape superintendent domination. The superintendent's professional expertise and control of information resources is a major factor,

TABLE 7

VOTING DECISIONS AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

	Mean	Low	High
Decisions Made by Voting	86	72	97
Unanimous Votes	85	62	99
Superintendent Position Known	66	12	88
Superintendent Position Adopted	96	74	100

yet a more fundamental factor is the board's image of its role. As Dykes says, "What the school board does depends in large measure on the board's view of itself in relation to its responsibilities."[19]

A majority of American school board members perceive their roles as being consistent with the values of professional educators. Lipham and his colleagues found that 90 percent of all school board members thought that they should not serve as spokesmen for segments of the community; yet slightly over one-fourth of the citizens thought this was a good idea.[20] Our earlier research supported this view: rather than serving as a conduit to channel popular views to administrators, boards define their job as "selling" the administration's program to segments of the community. School boards fail to assert their representative capacity partly because they find it difficult to do so, and partly because they choose not to do so.

SUPPLEMENTARY CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION

The next two stages in the governmental process are substantially less public than the preceding stages. The legislative action step produces a formal document which is an order from the school board to school district employees. Only a small proportion of these orders are meant to be implemented immediately. There is typically a lag time between legislative action and implementation. For example, because of the academic calendar, curriculum decisions made in May will not take effect for months.

The rationale for this delay between legislative action and implementation is threefold. First, it gives time for the development of implementation procedures by school district administrators. Second, it provides for a transition period between old and new programs during which time affected parties

can be informed of changes. Third, it provides a final opportunity for minor adjustment, major change, or even revocation of legislation prior to its implementation based on later developments. The supplementary change step involves changes which are made by the school board after legislative action and before implementation.

Supplementary change in school districts is rare. A major reason why decisions are rarely returned to the school board agenda is the fact that superintendents, unlike governors or even mayors, do not have the right to veto legislative decisions. The legal position of the superintendent would make such authority impossible. Again, too, the reality of the distribution of influence between board and superintendent makes a veto power absurd, since virtually all board policies are proposed by the superintendent. What reason for a veto could exist? Consequently, supplementary change in school governance tends, more than in other governance situations, to be incremental and technical, involving at most a few central office staff and perhaps participation by affected teachers and principals.

In rare cases of a particularly conflictual decision, pressures from external sources may achieve reconsideration, but such examples—although they create the illusion of widespread conflict--are not part of the normal routine of governance. More typically, supplementary change decisions enhance the domination of the superintendent over the school board. A recurring example is school boards acquiescing to administration proposals to transfer funds in the course of a fiscal year. The entire budget, the district's "master plan," has been debated and resolved months before. The superintendent requests additional funds for favored programs late in the fiscal year when the alternative to increased funding is program cutback or elimination. By changing

routine decisions to "crisis" decisions, superintendents can use the supplementary change step to reverse earlier adverse decisions or increase the probability of "victory" over the school board.

Implementation, as an activity of low visibility, which is limited to school district employees, is similarly dominated by professionals. Indeed, it is at the implementation phase of governance that linkages between policy intent and policy achievement can be most easily modified by professional hostility. The most apt example is the "new militancy" of teachers. Typically, teachers' organizations have virtually no influence upon educational policy. As compared to other professions, teachers have been less politically active and more reluctant to challenge the authority of superiors. However, even during their passive period, teachers shaped the educational process within the classroom, the level at which most constituent satisfaction or dissatisfaction could be expected.

As employees of the district, teachers were expected to implement district policy. In fact, they were free to implement or not, unless their noncompliance was so flagrant as to call it to the attention of administrative superiors. Organizationally impotent, teachers enjoyed substantial autonomy in the delivery to the client of educational services. This is not to say that they were not, if the occasion arose, subservient to administrators. Indeed, most teachers believed that administration of the building, or central office level, was more capable of making pedagogical decisions than they were and teacher autonomy was no more than a consequence of the ever increasing growth in size and complexity of the educational enterprise. As districts increased in size, both because of growth and consolidation, supervision became impossible.

However, this same increase in complexity also created an administrative

bureaucracy which, in turn, created a plethora of regulations which teachers were, at least nominally, expected to follow. As Guthrie puts it: "As school systems grew and came under the dominance of expert managers, teachers lost their ability to communicate freely with their employers, school trustees, or even with the superintendent and his staff."[21]

Alienation from work, as a consequence of bureaucratic expansion, contributed to the collectivization of teaching, and the systematic redirection of individual classroom authority. At the same time that implementation became less individualized, it also began to feed more systematically into the policy proposal phase of governance.

It is true that money is the primary issue when teachers bargain collectively. Written agreements, which now govern more than half of the nation's public school teachers, also frequently specify working conditions.[22] Both of these "bread and butter" items, which have quite properly been regarded as belonging to the implementation phase, have obvious policy implications. Money obviously impacts upon policy formation, even if teachers are not (and they typically are not) involved in district-wide budget-making. Additionally, however, working conditions may be linked, at least indirectly, to policy implementation. Thus, for instance, some contracts include under working conditions the controversial topic of teacher evaluation.

Finally, a growing number of contracts are overtly policy-oriented. For instance, contracts increasingly provide for teacher representation on groups that set curricular policy, select textbooks, and recommend educational programs.

It seems likely that overtly policy-linked items will increase in their negotiability. Corwin, for instance, has concluded that a desire for more

influence over school policy and disagreement with central level decision-making seems to account for most of the dissatisfaction underlying increased teacher militancy.[23] The more such demands are granted, the greater will be the escalation of demands for more influence. Ultimately, the entire policy-proposal phase could be encompassed in the bargaining between teacher organization and professional bargainer representing the board and administration.

Such a development would not radically alter the distribution of influence between board and superintendent, but would substantially reduce the now dominant policy-proposal function of the administration.

Pierce, for example, argues that, while the demand for lay participation did little to break administrators' control over schools, collective bargaining did quite a lot: "It was not until teachers began to organize and use collective bargaining to gain more control over educational policy that the monopoly of the school administration began to crumble."[24] An important point is that the challenge of collective bargaining not only threatens administrative dominance, it also reduces even further whatever policy initiation remaining with school boards.

Although, as we have noted, collective bargaining agreements are laden with policy, they are normally regarded as personnel negotiations and then conducted privately. Public disclosure of bargaining positions or strategies is an unfair labor practice. Hence, not only is public scrutiny impossible, the board and superintendent find it necessary to hire a negotiator. Neither administration or board members can follow the proceedings. Both may lose control of policy under such circumstances, allowing policy proposal functions to be assumed by people without any vestige of public accountability.

Although collective bargaining obviously is a major problem for school districts, it is a problem so concealed from public or board scrutiny that

no accountability is feasible. In our eleven school district study, we searched in vain for any discussion of collective bargaining at board or administrative cabinet meetings. When administration assumed control of policy, there was at least the possibility of board veto, although veto rarely occurred. Now, even such weak constraints are removed. Policy and implementation, one blurred because nominally administrative implementation made policy, is further blurred because nominal "delivery agents" are acquiring policy responsibilities. Thus, the chain of accountability is further weakened.

REVIEW

The final step in the policy-making process is review and evaluation of past decisions and programs. Of necessity, review must follow implementation. But as we shall see, the review process is continuous, and for some actors is concurrent with other steps in the policy-making process. Internal review is undertaken by school board members and district employees. External review involves participation by those outside the governmental unit.

There are two major types of internal review: executive review and legislative review. Most executive review occurs within the context of the executive recommendation step, with participation limited to school district administrators. This process is personified in most large districts by an administrator in charge of research and evaluation. There is also an ongoing process of executive review in the context of policy implementation management. On the micro level, principals review the performances of teachers. On the macro level, superintendents meet with their cabinets to assess district-wide programs.

Evaluation involves comparing actual performance with an expected performance or goal. The summary goal of public schools is to educate children.

There are, however, a number of indicators of success: enrollments, promotions, test scores, student-teacher ratios, etc., and a duplicate set of indicators relating benefits to costs. Furthermore, many evaluation indicators are technical or extremely detailed, and therefore difficult for the untrained and uninitiated to interpret.

Legislative review occurs within the context of the legislative action step. Because school board members are part-time, amateur and volunteer, they have neither the time nor the expertise to carry on an effective review and evaluation program. The fact that the time lag between legislative authorization, implementation, and assessment often spans several years--and several school boards—further impedes the effectiveness of legislative review in school districts.

State legislatures are increasingly turning to outside experts to help them review and evaluate programs. There does not seem to be a parallel trend in school districts. School boards do not have staff research support and have not secured experts independent of executive employees to aid them in the review process. School boards have relied on their own limited expertise and the expertise of laymen from the public who attend meetings and contact them in private. As a result, legislative review is weak in school districts.

External review of school district policies involves actors from other governments. As we have seen, participation of representatives of other governments is extremely rare. However, as the popular and professional administrative literature attests, this participation is extremely important when it does occur. Although external review can come from the executive and judicial branches of state and federal government, judicial review is presently of greater concern to school districts.

Ironically, judicial review is, in a sense, much less isolated from the

general public than are the steps in the policy-making process which occur entirely within the school districts. The courts are always responsive to the extent that suits are either accepted for consideration or rejected; and those accepted are subject to decision. The courts cannot table, bury in committee, ignore, or otherwise avoid the matters they accept for consideration. While gaining a place on the judicial agenda may be difficult, those who do so are assured that some timely action will be taken.

The well-known result is that minority groups, whose limited access and success in local school district reduces incentive to work at that level of government, have requested the intervention of state and federdl authorities on their behalf. Certainly the issue of equality of educational opportunity looms large in the review process. Not only is the maze of litigation surrounding federally mandated busing a prominent example of this issue, but the litigation involving finance also reflects this concern. The defense in such cases usually invokes the principle of local control as a justification for not achieving equal educational opportunity. Indeed, local control has even achieved statutory legitimacy. Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act states, "...the school....is most effective when the school involves the people of that community in a program designed to fulfill their education needs." But, to date, the principle of equality of opportunity has taken precedence over that of local control. Local options have given way to standardized procedures and programd inforced by the courts.

The other most conspicuous public debate involves the Serano and Rodrigues decisions. The impact of Serano was widely viewed as one of threatening local control, while Rodrigues was viewed as restoring local control. In fact, the former interpretation is more accurate. Federal courts are certainly likely

to avoid school finance issues since Rodrigues, but state courts are not. Additionally, the impact of both decisions is likely to shift the burden of financial reform to the state legislature which can expect its remedies to be subject to judicial review. Thus, continued litigation concerning educational equality will have the effect of removing the local board (and even the superintendent) from the policy process.

The thrust of legal challenges, whether financial or with regard to racial imbalance, is against local participation. Since the largest source of school revenue is local property taxes, wealthy districts can spend more than poor districts. Thus, equality of financial resources for education can only be achieved by statewide distribution programs. Further, since there is substantial variation in the wealth of states, the goal of equality may ultimately require a national system of school finance. As state and federal governments assume more control over financing education, opportunity for local populations to influence educational policy by voting for or against budgets will diminish, as will the opportunity for local administrators to set budgetary priorities.

The courts seem to be moving toward an unrealistic separation of policy-making and spending. The two clearly cannot be separated, and the policy implications of reduced local control of spending priorities are conspicuous. Further, there is a spill-over effect from increased litigation. Administrators, finding their districts involved in litigation, can seek judicial remedies for board action viewed as unreasonable. Thus, cases of superintendents successfully challenging a board decisions not to renew their contracts, and lower level administrators challenging similar decisions (especially those

regarding re-assignment) are becoming more prevalent. The upshot is that judicial review weakens the policy-making authority of all officials at the local level. Additionally, minority groups, who correctly perceive more access to non-local decision arenas, use the review process to augment their influence. Such augmentation, achieved at the expense of local officials, further insures their insulation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have used a six step model of school district governance to examine the role of six potential types of participants in the policy-making process. Different actors are eligible to participate at different steps; and the process is least insulated, in theory, from those outside the school district establishment at the proposal development and legislative action steps. However, few outsiders do participate directly. Furthermore, at each step in the policy-making process, administrators--especially superintendents--dominate school board members. Empirical data support neither a traditional model of governance from democratic theory, nor a democratic model of administrative representation. Again, the answer to the question, "Who governs public schools?" is "superintendents and their professional staffs."

Such a conclusion is, certainly, not without exceptions. Superintendents have to manage conflict, and some fail. Hence, superintendent turnover is a topic attracting increasing attention. Still, the fact that superintendents can be (and are) removed does not negate our argument. Indeed, the mere fact that the only solution to superintendent dominance is removal is testimony to our argument. The belief that boards should either support or remove superintendents poses extreme alternatives for boards and makes a "normal" bargaining

process even more difficult. We estimate that superintendents spend less than four hours per week in private communications with boards, hardly indicative of a sustained process of negotiation and compromise.

More effective challenges to administrative dominance are likely to come from efficiently organized teachers and, especially, from forces originating from outside the local district. Such challenges, however, serve only to exacerbate the insulation of educational policy-making from community politics.

APPENDIX I

SOURCES OF ORIGINAL DATA

A. Governing American Schools

The first source of original data reported in this paper is a study of school governance, conducted in 1968, which was based on a national sample of public school districts. A major report of findings was published in 1974 under the title, Governing American Schools, (L. Harmon Zeigler and M. Kent Jennings with the assistance of G. Wayne Peak, North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press). The reader is referred to that volume for a detailed account of the research design and data collection procedures. Other reports from the Governing American Schools study include: "Response Styles and Politics: The Case of the School Boards," L. Harmon Zeigler & M. Kent Jennings, Midwest Journal of Political Science, (May, 1971); "Interest Representation in School Governance," L. Harmon Zeigler & M. Kent Jennings, Urban Affairs Annual Review, 1972; "Racial Conflict in American Public Education," L. Harmon Zeigler, and Michael O. Boss, Sociology of Education, (June, 1974); "The Decision-Making Culture of American Public Education," L. Harmon Zeigler, Political Science Annual, Vol. 5, (Bobbs-Merrill, 1974); "Pressure Groups and Public Policy: The Case of Education," L. Harmon Zeigler and Michael O. Boss, in Spadaro, Dye, Golembiewski, and Zeigler, The Policy Vacuum (Lexington Books, 1975; "School Board Research: The Problems and the Prospects," L. Harmon Zeigler, in Cistone, Ed., Understanding School Boards (Lexington Books, 1975); "Professionalism, Community Structure, and Decision-Making: School Superintendents and Interest Groups," L. Harmon Zeigler, Michael O. Boss, Harvey J. Tucker, and L.A. Wilson, II, in Policy Studies Journal, (Summer, 1976); and "Experts and Representatives: Comparative Bases of Influence in Educational

Policy-Making," L. Harmon Zeigler and Michael Boss in Western Politics Quarterly, (forthcoming).

Briefly, the Governing American Schools inquiry was based on a national survey of school districts proportionate to the size of the school population. A sample of 83 school boards was designated. Out of a potential pool of 541 board members, successful interviews were obtained with 490; a response rate of 91 percent. Interviews were conducted in person and lasted, on the average, well over an hour.

The school board sample was supplemented with samples of superintendents and mass public. The response rate for superintendents was also extremely high: interviews were obtained with 81 of 83 candidates. A mass public sample was incorporated from the 1968 election study conducted by the Survey Research Center. The range of respondents across the districts in no instance exceeded 23, and the average was 8.5. Survey cases were weighted according to criteria explained in Governing American Schools.

The basic data files and accompanying codebooks for this study are available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

B. The Responsiveness of Public Schools to Their Clientele

The Governing American Schools project, while enjoying the advantages of generalizability from a national sample, suffered the unavoidable limitation of survey research. The attempt of the 1968 study to describe the functioning of school governance faced three interrelated problems:

1) The observations reported by respondents quite often were in conflict;

2) Individual recall of behavior was often inaccurate.

3) The discrepancy between reported and actual behavior was exacerbated when recollections involve interactions with others (e.g., school board members' interactions with superintendents, members of the public, etc.)

Because of these and other limitations, questions of school governance can only be partially studied by survey research.

In an attempt to fill the gaps left by previous research, a longitudinal comparative research project--titled The Responsiveness of Public Schools to Their Clientele--was conducted. This study included both systematic observation of events and periodic recording of participants' perceptions. During the nine month 1974-75 academic year data were collected on the flow of communications and decisions in eleven public school districts in the United States and Canada. The data set consists of three major elements:

(1) Objective records of all statements and decisions made at central school board meetings, meetings of the superintendent and his administrative cabinet, and other formally constituted media of public exchange (e.g., regional board meetings, public hearings, etc.) were recorded by two trained observers in each school district.

(2) School board members, superintendents, and other senior administrators were interviewed regularly to record their perceptions of presentations made by members of the public at meetings and private communications about school policy from members of the public. Those who made presentations at public meetings were interviewed concerning their perceptions of how they had been received by school district officials at the meeting and of any previous contacts.

(3) An opinion survey on school policy was conducted among samples of the mass public, interest group leaders, and among the school board and senior administrators in each school district.

Given the decision to attempt a comprehensive description of communications, only a limited number of school districts could be studied. An attempt was made to select a sample of districts which would reflect, albeit incompletely, the variety of districts in America. Districts included fall across the range of possible demographic attributes, formal decision rules and informal decision—processes, expected degree of conflict during the observation period. For a report of the findings, see "Communication and Decision-Making in American Public Education: A Longitudinal and Comparative Study," L. Harmon Zeigler, Harvey J. Tucker and L.A. Wilson, II, in the National Society for the Study of Education, 1977 Yearbook, (forthcoming).

FOOTNOTES

1. See William Boyd, "The Public, The Professionals, and Educational Policy-Making: Who Governs?" (Unpublished manuscript), and Paul E. Peterson, "The Politics of American Education," in Fred N. Kerlinger, Ed., Review of Research in Education, (Itasca, Ill.: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1974), for excellent reviews of the literature.

2. Both the Boyd and Peterson papers, for example, challenge the notion of insulation as advanced in Harmon Zeigler and M. Kent Jennings, Governing American Schools, (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1974).

3. There are, of course, other definitions of responsiveness. Our definition assumes that responsiveness is best understood as a reaction to expressed demands. Others, however, define responsiveness as the degree of congruence between policy and community expectations, whether articulated or not. For a discussion of the merits and pitfalls of various definitions, see Harmon Zeigler and Harvey Tucker, State and Local Politics: The Quest for Responsive Government, (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, forthcoming).

4. E. E. Schattschneider, The Semi-Sovereign People (New York: Holt, 1960), p. 68.

5. This analogy is suggested in Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, Participation in Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

6. These findings should not necessarily obscure some of the more subtle aspects of agenda-setting. In some districts the superintendent shared agenda-setting responsibility with the central office staff. In other districts the agenda is established for the board by the superintendent, yet established for him by his central office staff.. Our observations of administrative cabinet meetings uncovered districts in which the superintendent routinely accepted the agenda of his staff. In such cases the superintendent, who appeared publicly as the "expert," was himself deferring to other nominally subordinate experts. In these cases, where the superintendent, in effect, represents the agenda priorities of the staff to the board, the lines of authority and accountability are most blurred.

7. Boyd, op. cit., p. 31.

8. Some of these data were reported in Zeigler and Jennings, op. cit. A more exclusive analysis was undertaken by Michael O. Boss who tragically died before his manuscript was complete. These remarks are drawn from Boss' incomplete notes.

9. This analysis is taken from Boss' notes. It was found that the more

a district spends (as indicated by per-pupil expenditures), the higher the salience of curriculum issues to the public. Further, the salience of curriculum issues among the public seems more volatile than with decision-makers. Hence, the correlation between per-pupil expenditures and citing of curriculum problems is higher (.41) with the public than with the board (.24) and superintendent (.11). In suburban schools, fully 77 percent of the public cites curriculum problems, a percentage which exceeds that of the board and administration. Thus, although the education program is of low salience, it need not be so.

10. See, for example, Dale Mann, The Politics of Administrative Representation (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1976).

11. See M. Kent Jennings, "Patterns of School Board Responsiveness," in Peter J. Cistone, Ed., Understanding School Boards (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1975), pp. 246-249 for an explanation of this idea.

12. Zeigler and Jennings, op. cit., pp. 95-105 discussed the dominance of supportive groups in the communication pattern of school boards. Boss found superintendents to be even less diverse.

13. National School Boards Association, The People Look at Their School Boards (Research Report 1975-1), p. 31.

14. The idea of a defensive response is developed in Robert L. Crain, The Politics of School Desegregation (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 115-124. The data about superintendents, education and conflict management skills are found in Michael O. Boss, Harmon Zeigler, Harvey Tucker and L.A. Wilson, II, "Professionalism, Community Structure, and Decision-Making: School Superintendents and Interest Groups," Policy Studies Journal, (Summer, 1976), p. 360.

15. As a district becomes embroiled in such a controversy, public discussion diminishes, but private discussion is enhanced. The conflict management skills of the superintendent are not displayed publicly. Only his failure becomes public information after the fact.

16. Zeigler and Jennings, op. cit., p. 164.

17. Boyd, op. cit., p. 31.

18. These data are explained in Boss' unpublished notes.

19. Archie Dykes, School Board and Superintendent: Their Effective Working Relationships (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1965), pp. 132-133.

20. James M. Lipham, Russell T. Gregg, and Richard A. Rossmiller, "The School Board as an Agency for Resolving Conflict," Bethesda, Md.: Educational Resources Information Center, 1967.

21. James W. Guthrie, "Public Control of Schools: Can We Get It Back?" Public Affairs Report, 15(June, 1974), p. 3.

22. National School Boards Association, The Impact of Collective Bargaining on Curriculum & Instruction. (Research Report 1975-2), p. 6.

23. Ronald G. Corwin, "The Organizational Context of School Board-Teacher Conflict," in Cistone, Ed., op. cit., pp. 31-158.

24. Lawrence C. Pierce, "Teachers' Organizations and Bargaining: Power Imbalance in the Public Sphere," in National Committee for Citizens in Education, Public Testimony on Public Schools (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1975), p. 124.